

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on Aging  
February 26, 2013**

**H.B. 6460 AN ACT LIMITING THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION ABOUT MISSING ADULTS**

To the Joint Committee On Aging,

My name is Joshua Seavey and I am a current resident of Stratford, CT. **I am submitting this testimony to strongly urge you to support H.B. 6460 AN ACT LIMITING THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION ABOUT MISSING ADULTS.**

I am a young adult with a psychiatric diagnosis and with that in mind I feel that by including information about missing person's mental health diagnoses and symptoms in a Silver Alert is a violation of privacy and civil liberties. Unfortunately, our society continues to carry strong stigma against people with mental health issues. We are often stereotyped as being dangerous and capable of committing acts of violence and doing terrible things against our neighbors. The fact remains that these stereotypes are not supported by research; however, the general public continues to perceive mental illness through this biased lens.

The current format of the silver alert system implies that a missing person who has a psychiatric diagnosis is a danger to his or herself or to others when the person may have no criminal record of any kind and be completely harmless. Therefore, the Silver Alert System contributes to the stigma and prejudice against people with a psychiatric diagnosis and could cause innocent people to be alienated, avoided, attacked, harassed or bullied just because they have a psychiatric diagnosis.

Including information about psychiatric symptoms as part of a search for a missing person is as relevant as including information about a physical health issue. It's like saying, "is battling cancer," or "has HIV." Neither mental or physical health issues are relevant when it comes to conducting a police search for a missing person unless a person's condition is life threatening without medical attention.

In that case I believe the Silver Alert System should be amended to say that the missing person might be in need of medical attention. That's all it should say. Just put a box on the form available through the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection that a person filing the report can check to indicate if the individual has a health condition that could potentially be compromised as a result of their "missing".

I strongly urge you to support **H.B. 6460 AN ACT LIMITING THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION ABOUT MISSING ADULTS**, and limit the amount of information provided in the Silver Alert, This will go a long way in insuring that the rights of the missing individual are protected. I believe it would also help limit the perpetuation of stigma of people with psychiatric diagnoses.

Respectfully, Joshua Seavey